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ABSTRACT

The focus of this report is the Language Arts (LA) component within the Primary Education Improvement Project (PEIP II) in Jamaica that was launched in 1993 and specifically the cataloging and reviewing of LA materials being used in primary schools at the grade 4 to 6 levels. Content suitability, levels of difficulty, layout, print, and illustrations were studied in readers. Methodologies used in a sample of texts were evaluated. Visits to schools proved useful in the study as views of the teachers validated the findings from the review. Three major recommendations are mentioned: the matter of bilingualism in the Jamaican context must be properly dealt with; grammatical structures must be taught within meaningful contexts; teachers' guides should be developed. (Author/RS)

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Teaching Materials for the Language Arts Grades 4-6

A Study within the Primary Education Improvement Project in Jamaica

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Lena Holmberg
Ivy Mitchell

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A Study within the Primary Education Improvement Project in Jamacia

Lena Holmberg
Ivy Mitchell

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Three major recommendations are mentioned: The matter of bilingualism in the Jamaican context must be properly dealt with. Grammatical structures must be taught within meaningful contexts. Teachers' guides should be developed.

Keywords: Bilingualism, grades 4-6, Language Arts, teaching materials, teaching methodology.

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Introduction

This report is the result of collaboration. We, Lena Holmberg, Swedish consultant, and Ivy Mitchell, local consultant, are both consultants within the PEIP II (Primary Education Improvement Project) in Jamaica. The project is described in several reports. The main objectives were formulated by the MOEY&C (Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture). The work reported here was carried out during our assignment the 21/8 – 6/10 1995. Our terms of reference included:

1. Collect and register Language Arts (LA) materials being used in the primary schools grades 4 - 6
2. Evaluate materials for the LA grades 4 - 6

We planned, discussed, and visited schools together and collaborated in writing sections 4 and 5. However, for sections 1 and 2 Lena Holmberg had the full responsibility and for section 3 Ivy Mitchell.

We use this opportunity to thank all the principals and teachers for sharing their ideas with us. Without them and their students this work would have been difficult to accomplish.

Lena Holmberg Ivy Mitchell

1 Reviewing Texts in Readers for the Language Arts, Grades 4-6

Lena Holmberg

Before my arrival in Jamaica, Ivy Mitchell had collected texts being used in the English LA in the schools at the grade 4-6 levels.

The following criteria were used in evaluating the LA texts:

Content suitability
Levels of difficulty
Layout, print
Illustrations
Approaches used in texts, individualised learning techniques, child centred rather than teacher centred teaching, etc.
Community involvement.

Teachers' guides were also evaluated.

Although the review work was conducted in collaboration, it seemed practical that each of us focused on different aspects. My task then was to analyse the readers using the criteria outlined above.

The illustrations were studied according to the space they occupy on a page. Comments were made on their colours. The illustrations were not studied from an artistic point of view. To give an impression of the illustrations some were photocopied and included in the report to the MOEY&C. Here, however, only a summary of the analysis of the illustrations is presented.

The contents in the readers were analysed from two perspectives, the genre and the content area. This implies, that some subjective opinions will be articulated. Some key words, describing the content areas, were chosen to give an idea of the main message in the stories. One or two sentences were quoted from each story for the same purpose.

Both researchers analysed some of the texts and discussed our judgements to make the reviewing more reliable.

In analysing the difficulty of the texts in the readers Holmberg looked at the length of the stories. The length of the text was estimated, based on the average number of words on each page. Another measure, in Sweden called Lix, was used to study the difficulty of the texts. Assumptions behind this measure are, that the longer the words and the longer the sentences, the more difficult a text is to be read. The percentage of long words and the average sentence-length in each reader are added. The sum of the two measures gives the Lix-value.

First readers, developed by the MOEY&C in the 1970s, were analysed.

1.1 Readers, developed by the MOEY&C

A summary of the information on the *stories* in readers, developed by the MOEY&C during the 1970s for grades 4 - 6 is shown below. The tables show the categories, concerning genre and content area.

Table 1.1 Genres in the readers, developed by the MOEY&C

Genre/Grade	4	5	6
Narrative	9	5	7
Folk tale	2	1	1
Fairy tale	1	1	1
Legend	1	2	1
Informational	2	1	1

Most of the texts are narratives, 21 out of 36. The informational texts are sparse. It was decided therefore to analyse texts developed for subjects other than English, i.e., Science and Social Studies. Some books for Social Studies and Science were studied. Thus a more complete picture of the types of texts and various reading materials the students are exposed to emerged.

The most common content area in the readers is Ethics; 20 out of the 36 texts focused more or less on ethical matters. Ethics is a broad category, consisting of envy, sharing, behaviour, fear, courage, friendship, values in life, and the meaning of ownership, belongings, and people, etc.

Table 1.2 Content area in the readers, developed by the MOEY&C

Content area/Grade	4	5	6
Ethics	7	7	6
Adventure	2	1	3
History	2	1	1
Science	4	1	0
Sports	0	0	1

Some of the stories stress the ability to cope with poverty and the importance to value other things in life than material belongings. A subjective impression is that it might be hard for children to be as good as the main characters sometimes are. A rather usual theme is "the lonely mother", who has a hard time caring for her children.

In most of the stories the boys are adventurous and the girls are very "girlish", i.e., many of the children are stereotypes. However, there are some exceptions.

The stories in the readers are not updated. Pounds, shillings and pence are the currency. As mentioned, the readers were published during the 1970s.

In the first five full pages in each reader the numbers of words were counted to give an approximation of words per page. In cases where there were no five full pages in a reader, approximations were made. The space for illustrations was estimated and deducted from the total pages of the story. By multiplying full text pages by mean words per page a rough measure of length was achieved.

The measures concerning numbers of words, space for texts and illustrations, and the Lix value are shown in table 1.3.

The stories get progressively longer as the grade increases, which is shown in the average number of words for each grade and the average text space. Interestingly enough, also the space for illustrations is increasing over the grades. The difficulty of the readers, as measured by the Lix, also increases over the grades. Perhaps the increase should be somewhat larger between grade 4 and grade 5. The difference in Lix between grades 4 and 6 is statistically significant (p=0.000). However, in grade 5 the stories are of more varied

difficulty than in the other grades. The standard deviations are 2.51, 3.69, and 3.01 for grade 4, 5, and 6 respectively.

Table 1.3 Number of words, space for texts and illustrations, and the Lix measure in the readers, developed by the MOEY&C

Means per grade/Grade	4	5	6
Number of words	1149	1574	2467
Text space	6.73	7.95	10.86
Space for illustrations	3.00	4.15	4.91
Lix	19.33	19.60	23.67

The layout and the illustrations

As mentioned earlier, the layout and the illustrations were not be analysed from an artistic point of view. However, I would like to demonstrate the impression they might make on the students. To do this some of the illustrations were copied and pasted into the report for the MOEY&C. Here only a brief summary is given.

It is not always possible to see what are the purposes of the illustrations. Their contribution to the content in the stories is questionable. The print is often blurred, and the pages are skewed. The messages and the intentions of the illustrations are probably lost due to the effort to make a cheap production. Hence, the contribution of the illustrations is lost to some extent.

1.2 New Caribbean Junior Readers

In this section Holmberg reports on the analysis of the New Caribbean Junior Readers. Four books are studied, namely those for levels 2, 3, 4, and 5. No indication of grades is to be found in the readers, which means that the results are given by levels and not by grades.

In the readers every fourth passage was analysed, in all 31 stories, poems or informational texts. The texts were chosen randomly.

To measure the words in each story in the readers one full page in the beginning of each reader, one in the middle, and one in the end were counted. The mean was calculated and multiplied by the number of pages in each story. The measure of difficulty, the Lix value, was calculated in the way described earlier.

Some new categories concerning content area were added. These are Social Studies, Art, and Other. The category History should perhaps be included in the Social Studies category. The Other category is needed not to make the categories too many but to show the variety of topics.

A new category concerning genre is also introduced, namely Poetry. It is not frequent, but still it is interesting to notice that in the readers from 1990s some poems are included.

Table 1.4 Genres in the New Caribbean Readers

Genre/Level	2	3	4	5
Narrative	2	2	1	1
Folk tale	1	1	1	1
Fairy tale				
Legend	1			
Informational	4	5	5	2
Poetry			1	3

Obviously the most common genre in the New Caribbean Junior Reader is the informational text, 16 out of 31 passages. The reason for this might be that the idea of "English across curriculum" is turned into practice. When we discuss the content areas we will elaborate on this.

Table 1.5 Content areas in the New Caribbean Readers

Content area/Level	2	3	4	5
Ethics	2	1	1	3
Adventure			1	
History	2	1		
Science	1	3	3	2
Sports	1			
Social Studies		2	2	1
Art		1		
Other	2			1

The content areas in the readers from the 1990s differ from those developed in the 1970s. The newer readers cover a greater range of content areas. They are

often built up in themes in the readers for levels 2, 3, and 4. The passages in the reader for level 5 are not so easily put together into themes though the following themes can be identified:

Level 2: Rain (pp. 2-16)
Dragons and alligators (pp. 17-31)
Secrets (pp. 43-58)
Hearing and seeing disabilities (pp. 71-78)
The sea (pp. 82-93)
The radio (pp. 94-103)
Heritage (pp. 104-118)
The Moon (pp. 119- 125)

Level 3: Water and rain (pp. 10-19)
Festivals (pp. 21- 35)
Trees (pp. 61-76)
Messages (pp. 77-84, and 121- 125)
Cane (pp. 93-102)
Water Safety (pp. 113-119)
Volcanoes (pp. 126-141)

Level 4: Arts and Colours (pp. 2-13)
Arawak Indians, Maya (pp. 14- 25, and 61-62)
Turtles (pp. 26-38)
Clouds (pp. 52-60)
Farming and gardening (pp. 64-84)
Insects (pp. 85-94)
Earthquakes (pp. 112-121, and 122-124)

From the reader for level 5 I quote:

> The topics and themes included in the readers cover a wide range of areas some of which are listed in social studies curriculum guides. These are systematically developed throughout the four readers, e.g. Water (uses, weather, conservation of etc.), see below.

It seems as if the New Caribbean Junior Readers, what genres and content areas are concerned, are built up in a way, which might help the teachers (Bryan & Holmberg, 1995, p. 13):

To reinforce the holistic nature of language experience by transferring that orientation towards integration to what happens inside the classroom. It follows therefore that the teaching needs to be thematic and consequently facilitate the children's immersion in language-rich experiences.

In the table below some quantitative information on the passages in the New Caribbean Junior Readers is presented. There is a tendency that the number of words and the difficulty of the texts increase over the levels. However, the increase of words is not statistically significant. The standard deviations tell us that there is a larger difference in the length of texts in level 4 and 5 than in the lower levels, much due to the poems in levels 4 and 5, which are short.

Table 1.6 Number of words, space for texts and illustrations, and Lix in the New Caribbean Junior Readers

Measures/Means per level	2	3	4	5
Number of words	474	527	679	961
Text space	2.31	2.13	1.94	2.57
Space for illustrations	1.57	0.92	1.00	1.43
Lix	22.4	28.3	33.6	32.2

Layout and illustrations

As in the case with the readers developed by the MOEY&C pictures were included and discussed in the report to MOEY&C. Here a short summary is given.

In the New Caribbean Junior Readers the illustrations seem to fulfil the purpose of adding information to the content in the texts. The text in conjunction with the picture gives the information. The illustrations are often integrated with the text into a whole and contribute to the understanding. They add information, that is hard to give in words. Sometimes small pictures are used to cover the marginal.

To sum up: It seems as if the illustrations in the New Caribbean Junior Readers are chosen with care. The extent to which a picture contributes to the understanding of an informational text or the extent to which it challenges the child's fantasy and creativity seem to be criteria for its inclusion.

The illustrations are of different types, photos in black and white, and in colours, portraits in colours, fantasy pictures with or without colours, informational illustrations, etc. They are placed on the pages in a way, that supports the understanding of the texts.

1.3 Textbooks used in grades 6 and 7

1.3.1 Social Studies and Science books for grade 6

Thanks to an officer at the MOEY&C, we got a newly published book in Social Studies from the publisher Carlong. The book is just now being reprinted in Newspaper print, to be sent out to the schools next year. From the same publisher books for grade 4 and 5 have already been delivered to the schools.

The original book has a lot illustrations in four colours. These will be in black and white when the books are distributed to the schools. The recommended price for the original book is 295 Jd.

What makes the book interesting from a LA point of view is the way language is used in communicative and functional settings. The book is divided into five units: Earth and her Neighbours in Space, Atmosphere, Land and Water, Latitude and Longitude, Weather and Climate and People on Planet Earth.

The difficulty of the text is studied in the first passage from each unit.

Earth and her Neighbours in Space	Lix=21.9
Atmosphere, Land and Water	Lix=23.4
Latitude and Longitude	Lix=31.3
Weather and Climate	Lix=34.1
People on Planet Earth	Lix=30.4

The Lix values range from level 2 to level 5 compared to the texts in the New Caribbean Junior Readers, which range from 22.4 to 33.6. They are more difficult than the texts in the readers developed by the MOEY&C.

The tasks, suggested for further work on the information in the text are for example:

> Make a list of reasons why Earth's people could not live on Mercury.
> If you lived on Venus, how many times would you celebrate Christmas before the people on the planet with the longest year have one Christmas?

Do some research about the planets and see if you can find out how the other planets got their names.

Sometimes the suggested tasks covering the same content area are of progressive difficulty:

Make a list of the ways we are destroying our planet, and suggest how we can stop the destruction before it is too late.
Write a letter to a friend outlining how you could help to clean up our world before it is too late.

Write a letter to the government minister in charge of the environment and offer to help him/her plan activities for the next Earth Day.

Describe any unusual weather you have experienced.
Talk to some older persons in your community to find out...

Also the talking mode is addressed in the suggested tasks:

Something to talk about:
For the tourist, no rain is 'good' weather.
For the farmer, it depends.
For the fisherman, too much wind is bad weather.
The surfer needs all the wind he can get.
What about you? What do you think is good weather?

In the last unit the students are really involved in their learning. A Case Study-methodology is introduced. A transcribed interview is presented, out of which the students are to find information. Questions on the methodology are posed:

Make a list of all the reasons why:
a) Pam must prepare her questions beforehand for the interview.
b) Pam must get Mr Asante's permission to use a tape recorder at the interview.

In the end of the book the students are encouraged to plan "an open day" to highlight one of the places they have studied, i.e. to show the results of their efforts.

A set of Science books for grades 4 - 6 was studied. The Lix-values for different units in them were calculated.

Grade 4:		*Grade 5*:	
Plants Around Us	Lix=23.7	Ourselves	Lix=23.2
Plants And Soils	Lix=23.0	Matter and Heat Energy	Lix=24.8
Rocks	Lix=31.6	Forces and Motion	Lix=20.9
Forces And Machines	Lix=19.1		
Gravity	Lix=22.5		

Grade 6:	
Sound	Lix=28.0
Light	Lix=34.1
Let's do a Project	Lix=40.0

It is obvious that the book for grade 6 is the most difficult to read regarding the technical aspects of reading, reminding us that the difficulty of the subject matters are not considered.

The last unit for grade 6, that is the last unit for primary level, gives the students suggestions on how to carry out a project. In this unit language is used as a means for achieving information as well as reporting. The expression "language across the curriculum" comes into practice.

To sum up: In the Social Studies book for grade 6 LA can be promoted in realistic and functional settings. Many different writing forms are used, i.e. poem, song, diary, postcard, personal letter, information narrative, information presentation, instructions, rules, radio program, advertisement, etc.

The illustrations in the book are in many cases instructive and complementary to the text. Others show things which could hardly be described in the text. The illustrations themselves can be starting points for discussions in class.

1.3.2 Books for grade 7

A LA book for grade 7 was analysed, namely *School and Family* (Marschall, E. & Feraria, P., 1944). It was developed for beginning readers in lower secondary schools, thus it is an easy book for students in the 7th grade. The Lix-value is about the same as in the reader for grade 6, developed by the MOEY&C and between the levels 2 and 3 in the New Caribbean Junior Readers. The book is built up thematically. The units are: It's a new school year, Finding your way, Lunch time, Family business and One family. There are a lot of illustrations in

black and white. In each there are some comic-strips, where the students learn to know Brenda, Peter, John and Ann. The speech bubbles are in Creole.

There is a book also for Social Studies, *Living together, Social Studies for grade 7* (Secondary Schools Textbook Project, the MOEY&C, 1994), which was reviewed. From the guide to the teachers' we quote (p. 200):

> Living together was written especially for Grade 7 students identified as having a grade 4/5 reading level. It is designed to help Social Studies teachers provide students entering Grade 7 reading at the Foundation 2* level with the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the GOJ/ROSE curriculum; additional basic reading instruction, and further opportunities to develop their higher-level thinking.
>
> *In the GOJ/ROSE Social Studies curriculum, the term *Foundation 2* is used interchangeably to identify the grade 4/5 reading level. The students at this level, and some of the activities they may be asked to do.

The teaching principles on which the book is based are listed (p. 200):

- we learn to read by reading, and the more meaningful the content of the material, the more likely it is that we will learn to read
- we have to learn how to read expository materials
- an oversimplified text would not allow for the range of reading activities that students reading at the Foundation 2 level need, nor would it necessarily make the Social Studies content easier to comprehend, or engage learners' interest to the level that they would reflect on what they have read and want to read more
- the same reading skills can be learnt in different ways by different learners
- the learners' experiences, feelings, and ideas are resources for the curriculum
- all students, including those reading or writing below grade level, need challenges
- collaborative rather than competitive classrooms foster reading development
- an integrated curriculum approach enhances students' reading and language development
- talking is the key to thinking and learning.

The principles are in many respects coherent with the suggestions from different advisory committees, which were analysed and reported in Consultants Working Paper on The Language Arts Component (Bryan & Holmberg, 1995). They will be made into practice in the suggestions for the revised LA curriculum and for tests on reading and writing in grade 6.

2 Teachers' Guides

Lena Holmberg

This section reports on the following:

Teacher's Guide Grade 4, MOEY&C
Teacher's Guide Grade 5, MOEY&C

To the Teacher, pp. 126-128, New Caribbean Junior Reader 2
To the Teacher, pp. 142-145, New Caribbean Junior Reader 3
To the Teacher, pp. 127-129, New Caribbean Junior Reader 4
To the Teacher, pp. 127-128, New Caribbean Junior Reader 5.

A study of the suggestions for activities, following the stories in the New Caribbean Junior Readers was also done.

2.1 Teachers' Guides from the MOEY&C

Unfortunately only the Teachers' Guides for grades 4 and 5 were available. They are both organised in the same way. To each passage there is a teaching plan included:

Summary for the Teacher
Introducing the Story
Directed Reading
Teacher-Directed Activities
Independent Activities.

The summary for the teacher is written to give a quick but very brief reminder of the story itself. "It is not to be read aloud to the children" (Teachers' Guide, Grade 4, 1980, p. 7, and Teachers' Guide Grade 5 1980, p. 7).

The introductions to the teacher give some advice of how to motivate the children to read the passages. Mostly, this advice is about how to make the child relate and connect to, and feel part of the story. Questions like the following are usual:

> Have you ever heard stories of people who can change themselves into animals and other things? (The Cat Woman and the Spinning Wheel)

Have you ever gone to another school or place where you had no friends? (Can Annie Make Friends?)
Have you ever helped someone, when no one else would help that person? (Good Follows Good)
Do you know of anyone who is always trying to make fun of others? (The Troublemaker)
Have you ever heard of anybody who was sick and got better after bathing in special water? (The Story of Bath)

The guides concerning the directed reading is almost as stereotyped as are the introductions. Most of them say: "Read the story and/to find out...."

The suggestions for teacher directed activities mostly consist of questions on the content, which *promote* comprehension -- or if used wrongly -- *test* comprehension. Some of the suggested independent activities are listed below:

Find contradictions in the story
Write words that mean almost the same as...
Make adverbs out of adjectives
Write words in alphabetical order
Replace underlined words with a word that is opposite in meaning
Close sentences
Write 2 sentences for each of these words which all have more than one meaning
Do the crossword puzzle, using the clues
Punctuate the following sentences

The suggested activities are traditional activities within the teaching of LA. They can all be accomplished on an individual basis. Activities which demand group work are sparse, and mostly formulated like this:

Make up and act out a play from this story.

Free writing is the most common suggestion for creative individual work.

Write your own story of what happened when you ...
Write the story of what you think happened
Write another story with one of the sayings as a heading
Write a different ending to this story

In some cases the children are asked to make drawings, mostly as an illustration to a special story :

> Illustrate your story with a picture or pictures
> Draw and colour a picture of ...

In short...

It seems as if the activities suggested for each passage might be summed up in a general teachers' guide for the LA.

2.2 "To the Teacher" in the New Caribbean Junior Reader

Following most of the passages in the New Caribbean Junior Readers there are suggestions on how to work with the texts. All the tasks are indicated with explanations of the kinds of skills being developed. In each of the readers there are some pages at the end suggesting tasks. These are divided into the separate skills. The table below sums up.

Table 2.1 Skills recommended for different levels in the New Caribbean Junior Readers

Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Word Recognition	Word Recognition		
Comprehension and Literature	Comprehension and Literature	Comprehension and Literature	Comprehension and Literature
Language	Language		
Study Skills	Study skills	Study skills	Study skills
Checking written work	Composition and writing skills	Composition and writing skills	Composition and writing skills
Evaluation	Evaluation	Evaluation	Evaluation

In the table below there is a summary of the suggestions for tasks to follow the passages in the readers. The tasks are divided according to the headings in the readers (the skills) and according to the level of the readers.

Table 2.2 A summary of tasks per level

Activity	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Comprehension	29 (41%)	34 (52%)	41 (54%)	31 (48%)
Language	18 (26%)	7 (11%)	9 (12%)	5 (8%)
Study skills	6 (9%)	10 (15%)	7 (9%)	4 (6%)
Vocabulary	5 (7%)	4 (6%)	6 (8%)	5 (8%)
Creativity	4 (6%)	1 (2%)	0	0
Literature	5 (7%)	2 (3%)	1 (1%)	3 (5%)
Writing skills	0	4 (6%)	6 (8%)	13 (20%)
Other	3 (4%)	3 (5%)	6 (8%)	4 (6%)
Total	70	65	76	65

Comprehension is the most common activity to follow up reading. Creative work, group work, and writing tasks are seldom suggested. The recommendations in the quoted lines below, concerning levels 4 and 5 (p. 127 and p. 127 respectively) are not often followed up in the suggested tasks.

> It is important to make full use of the reader as part of your programme to develop the pupil's grammar, spelling and punctuation skills and ensure their progress in all language arts.

My recommendation is that the passages to a greater extent will be used as prompts for creative work, i.e., writing compositions, poems, plays, booklets, and drawings. It is further suggested that a teacher's guide be developed and made available to all LA teachers -- a book that exemplifies the structure and the methods the of LA teaching, which makes full use of the child as the developer of his/her language.

3 Methodologies Used in a Sample of Texts

Ivy Mitchell

3.1 Comprehension passages in four sets of texts

The ability to read and comprehend at the instructional or independent level is critical to the reading process. A comparison of a sample of texts being used in grade 4-6 at the primary level shows that critical comprehension skills are not being developed as they should. Four different texts being used at this level were examined and comparison made on their approach to assisting the teacher in developing comprehension skills, especially critical thinking.

The approach used in assessing the comprehension passages was as follows:

types of comprehension passages (genre)
focus of questions, e.g. recall, inferential, prediction, etc.
vocabulary
association of ideas

Examples of the composition of two comprehension passages:

(A)	Comprehension passage:	The Wishing Pool
	Genre:	Narrative – story/fantasy
	Content:	Conversation – Princess and Frog Prince
	Questions:	11 items: 7 recall, 2 inferential, 1 vocabulary, 1 prediction
(B)	Comprehension passage:	Navigation in Columbus's Day
	Genre:	Informational – historical
	Content:	Sailing ships and instruments in Columbus's Day
	Questions:	12 items, 10 recall, 2 inferential

The three sets of texts below were analyzed using the above criteria. These texts will be designated sets of Books A, B & C for the purposes of anonymity .

3.1.1 Set A comprises 2 books covering grades 4 and 5

Comprehension passage:	Of Wine and Wineskins (Insight into Bible times and customs).

Genre:	Informational – Biblical
Content:	A comparison of modern wine bottles made of glass and wineskins made of animal skins.
Questions:	All ten questions are recall questions easily found in the passage.
Comprehension passage:	The Flattered Flying Fish
Genre:	Poetry – animal relationships
Content:	A shark tricks a flying fish to have dinner with him
Questions:	Of eight questions 5 are recall, 2 inferential and 1 vocabulary. The questions do not encourage the children to see the irony in dinner for two, nor to explore the character of both the shark and the flying fish, for example, the knowledge of human/"fish" nature.

Overall Comments on Comprehension on Set A

While many of the passages chosen for comprehension are interesting, too many are narrative in the first book but the second has a better balance with 7 narrative passages, 8 informational and 2 poems.

Strengths: The comprehension passages are short, mostly interesting and informative, within the children's experience. There is effort to use the titles to engage the children's attention, e.g. "The Great Cheese Robbery". The illustrations are clear and effective.

Weaknesses: At this level, grades 4-6, questions on comprehension passages should be challenging, encouraging higher order thinking, focussing on drawing conclusions, making predictions and giving reasons for outcomes, etc. These questions focus mainly on the factual and on recall.

The books do not use a thematic approach and so passages fail to explore a line of thought which allow students to build additional knowledge on what is already known. The exercises test knowledge mostly at the literal level with no incentive for gaining a deeper understanding of the passages.

3.1.2 Set B comprises 3 books covering grades 4-6

Comprehension: (Book 1)	A picture of a food cart – bottles of drink and food items; boy leaning on handle, woman standing up front: A lot of writing telling what is sold; name of cart's owner, motto, (directive) "CASH TODAY CREDIT TOMORROW" is on the cart.
Questions:	Twelve questions testing different comprehension skills, e.g. What is the picture? .... recall/fact Name of owner? ..... observation Who do you think? ... inference Does the owner care about her cart? (association of ideas) Meaning of CASH TODAY CREDIT TOMORROW(previous knowledge/ experiential/vocabulary Meaning of vendor's motto: "Honesty is Best" (making connections) What is your country's motto? (making connections)
More things to do:	Write popular sayings or mottoes. Example given Make up and write others Draw vendor you know ... Write description

Each comprehension exercise begins with: "Let's talk about ...". This begins with "Let's Talk About Vendors" followed by several questions to initiate/generate talking and ideas. Ends with a poem about various fruit and foods.

Comprehension: (Book 2)	Sports Let's talk about sports Six questions for oral discussion Photographs of 5 children Annual Sports Day Score Board for Springfield Primary School Names of Houses Blue, Yellow and Red

Questions: (Finding answers)	14 questions based on the score board which tells races entered in by boys and girls, the position they take and the houses they are in. Questions challenge children to read, observe and come to conclusions.
More Things To Do:	Integration of Language Arts and Math. Children asked to measure 1.30 metres and compare with height of people in class Pictures of 4 world famous runners from Trinidad, Jamaica and Barbados. Children are asked to find out about them or any other athletes of their country. Group Work – find out about the Olympic games, etc.
Comprehension: (Book 3)	Let's Talk About Leaders. Six questions to generate interest. Names and photographs of Napoleon Bonaparte, Marcus Garvey, Mahatma Gandhi, Joan of Arc, Comprehension passage about Martin Luther King Jr. (fairly long).
Questions: (Finding Answers)	Twelve questions, 4 recall, 2 inferential, 6 drawing conclusions and giving personal opinion from what is read.
More Things To Do:	Find out about the leaders mentioned earlier Find places mentioned in the passage on a map of the United States. Famous Leaders of your country Find out all about one. Share information with class. Make a stamp in honour of the leader you chose.

Overall Comments on Comprehension in this set.

All three texts use a variety of topics and subject matter for comprehension which range from pictures, poems, short and long passages.

One strength is the appeal to the children's imagination and the scope for research and creativity in the type of questions asked and the follow up activities. As the books advance so do the exercises in levels of difficulty and demand on the students' thinking abilities.

3.1.3 Set C , Two Texts Grades 5 and 6

Comprehension:	Two Friends (narrative/desc.) Short paragraph of 8 lines
Questions:	Ten multiple choice questions each with 4 options testing recall, vocabulary and understanding. This passage is typical of the types of passages and questions in the whole book.
Comprehension:	Poem "My Mother" a Sonnet
Questions:	Seven multiple choice questions all testing recall

Overall Comments on this set

Although students are directed to read each poem or passage aloud two or three times and to discuss the answers to be put in the boxes there is no challenge in the questions. In this poem for example, much could be made of the contrast between the octave and sestet, between the boy's reluctance to leave his dying mother, her 'eyes' saying she would last another day and the reality of her quick death.

Actually, this type of poem is not suitable for multiple choice items since there is so much emotion which needs indepth discussion and comparison with real life.

Book three of this series is far more interesting as it has longer, more meaningful passages. Each passage begins with "Chatting About Things" as children are asked to talk to each other or with the teacher about the theme of the unit. They are given words and phrases, etc. to assist in generating ideas.

At the end of a letter, poem or passage the students are told "Now say complete sentences as answers to these questions. Do not write, and do not just say a word or phrase."

In book 3 students are encouraged to do a lot of meaningful oral work. The instructions could, however, be varied.

3.1.4 D (one text) [A revision guide for Grades 5 and 6]

This text is meant to be used during the last two years of primary schooling.

Section 5 of the text deals with comprehension. The section begins with an explanation of the types of questions usually asked, i.e. recall; meaning of words or phrases as used in the passage; (examples of this are given, eg. different meanings of save). These are questions which require you to read between the lines.

The passages are chiefly narrative, there is one poem and some informational passages.

Comprehension:	Bauxite mining in Jamaica-Informative. Three short paragraphs
Questions:	Six questions, 2 testing recall, 2 understanding, 1 vocabulary and 1 inferential Questions are asked in a variety of ways instead of the usual what, when, who, etc. students are asked whether a statement is True or False; from evidence in the passage why? etc. Write down...; Find a word which, etc.
Comprehension:	Poem – First day at school
Questions:	Test children's higher order thinking skills and get them to understand the feelings of the narrator in the poem. Questions test students' ability to draw inferences and their understanding of the poem.

Overall Comments

This text is divided into six sections. Section five, the comprehension section, gives a selection of short, interesting passages with which the students can

identify. The number of questions range from as few as four to as many as eight depending on the length and difficulty of each passage. Questions are set in a variety of ways aimed at maintaining the students' interest while encouraging higher order thinking skills.

3.2 Writing – comments on texts

Writing, that is sustained pieces of creative writing, needs attention at the primary level. Teachers complain that students enter grade 7 of secondary school being unable to produce a paragraph of sustained writing. One reason put forward for this is that students are not required to write compositions in the Common Entrance Examination. This subject is not stressed until after the sitting of the Examination (CEE). If this is the case then our children are being short changed. *Children learn to write through writing.*

An assessment of the language arts texts seems to bear out this popular view. The Following examples will indicate how much writing is suggested by 4 books at the Grade 4-6 levels of the primary school.

3.2.1 Set A Book 4

Writing exercises	Picture – lady leaning on verandah rails, truck, man, girl, goat, trees, etc.
Exercise	(a) Make a list of the nouns shown in this picture.
Mostly sentence completion throughout	(b) Find the nouns … and write them down (c) Complete the nouns with the missing letters

There is only one piece of sustained writing in this text.

3.2.2 Set B Book 2

Writing exercises	A 'Why' Story Write one of the 'why' stories you have heard or make up a story of your own. 'A Cat or Goat I Know'

Interesting exercises in writing. Material relevant and within children's experience	Carefully describe a cat or a goat you know Write two paragraphs telling its size, colour, what it feels like and how it moves (number of questions asked to generate ideas) Keeping a journal. (Explanation of what a journal is and how to use it)

3.2.3 Set C Book 4

Writing exercises	Composition practice. 5 sentences taken from comprehension story. One is out of place. Writer explains how this could be remedied.
Topics within students' experience. Quite a lot of sustained writing	Children asked to take these separate sentences and write them as a paragraph

3.2.4 D (A revision guide)

Lesson: How We Communicate. The Sentence.

Writing exercises:	Students are asked to: Write 5 interesting sentences about each girl in the picture Write 4 sentences that you believe each girl wrote in her diary about the trip.
Interesting writing exercises even when teaching grammar	3. The girls were going to Montego Bay. Write 5 sentences which tell what you think they planned to do during their four-week vacation there. 4. Write a composition of about 6 sentences on one of these topics: a A journey by train b A journey by bus

Overall Comments on Writing

The writers of the texts use the thematic approach in their units as frequently as possible. There is effort to link the comprehension topic with the writing exercise. In the case of SET B spelling and other grammatical exercises are built into shapes of animals or things discussed. For example in the Unit "Let's Talk About Anansi". The story is about how Anansi tricked snake. The spelling exercise asks the students to learn to spell the words on the snake. There is a drawing of a large brightly coloured snake with words written on its body.

In one of the texts, Set A, a theme is hardly ever sustained over more than one lesson and not across subject areas. Occasionally there are references to people or things that were dealt with in other units. Only in Units 6 and 7 do we see some attempts to sustain a theme.

3.3 Methodologies and new approaches

The Set A series is rather traditional and stresses grammatical structures more than comprehension and sustained writing skills. The series could be used for revision exercises and to measure how much students remember the structures taught. All the books require the students to fill in blanks or complete sentences, and so on, out of context.

Writing is stressed in Set B and the use of Journals is an integral part of every Unit. Like the authors of Book D these authors use familiar subjects, people and things. A courtroom scene is used to teach grammatical structures.

Familiar names and pictures are used in addition to references to other Caribbean countries; cartoons, cricket/cricketers, closing down sale, etc. as a part of the material. The illustrations and photographs in the first two books are colourful and appealing and are used to engage the children's interest in learning the structures of the language.

The author of Set C writes that, "language lessons must be based as far as possible on the learners' experiences and on the vocabulary they use..." He reminds the teacher that the books stress the learners' talk "as a starting point for speaking, reading and writing".

All the Units in Book 3 of this set begin with "Chatting about things", so the children are supposed to talk about what they will read in the comprehension

passage. They are prompted by questions and in answering the comprehension questions afterwards, are told how to begin, e.g.

Question:	Where did Ali Baba live?
Answer:	Ali Baba lived ...

This could be limiting as children might want to answer in sentences without beginning as the author suggests.

The authors' aim in Book D was to make the learning of English Language "...enjoyable, creative and profitable". They did make an effort to fulfil their aim. In this text a variety of approaches are used to teach language:

Drama:	Two girls travelling by diesel to Montego Bay talk about themselves. The language is casual even as the girls speak in English. Expressions such as, "That was a close one!" "Wow!" "That's better" ... are used.
Familiarity:	Names of places, people and things familiar to the children are used in grammar exercise so Common Entrance, Kingston College; rice, peas, reggae, disco, names of the Caribbean islands all feature in teaching parts of speech. In teaching pronouns, the story of Anansi and his Magic Pot is used, etc.

4 School Visits

Lena Holmberg and Ivy Mitchell

This section of the working report is written in collaboration. We made all the school visits together, and if it was not for Ivy Mitchell we would never have had the opportunity to see a variety of schools, talk to principals for hours, have meetings with the teachers arranged, have booklists etc.

4.1 School 1

On the 20th of September I spent one day at School 1. The principal spent the morning together with Dr. Mitchell, the training officer within the LA component and me. The principal shared with us her great concern for the children at her school, especially the physically disabled ones. The integration/main streaming of the handicapped children is no experiment any longer at School 1, but a natural thing in the every day life at school.

There are three departments in the school:

1 An infant department of three classes. Children are 4-5 years old.

2 A special unit for children who are physically handicapped. Many of these children are from Government's children's homes. Some live at the Polio Rehabilitation centre during the school week Monday-Friday then return to the Children's homes or their own homes for the weekends.

The Rehabilitation centre has wards for these children who are incontinent and hostels for these who "board" i.e., come from Government's institutions such as Maxfield Park Children's Home.

A special unit tests the children in order to put them into groups, suitable for them. There are seven teachers and two teacher's aids. The aids are paid by the St Andrews Lutherans of Minnesota, who saw the need for freeing teachers from cleaning up, taking children to the bathrooms etc. Government does not provide this service. All the regular teachers are trained in special education.

3 The regular school grades 1 – 6

One impression which a visitor to the school has right away is the fact that in every classroom there are a number of books.

Grade 1: These students seem to love reading and delighted in telling their favourite stories from an American book.

Keys to reading - Blue Dilly Dilly. This book was a gift from the Oronto School District.

The children could tell what happened to the Ginger Bread Man and showed great facility with words often switching form Creole to SE and back without any conscious effort. We learned that the stories need not be Jamaican or Caribbean while they had a universal appeal.

The illustrations in the book were bright and interesting and the print large.

It was pleasing to see a grade 1 class being taken to the school library by the librarian who came for them. We followed her to the library, after giving the class time to settle down. It was story telling time and the story was about Brer Anancy. The children answered several questions and talked about Spider and Anancy before listening to the story.

Grades 2 and 3: Children were occupied, some at PE others doing LA or Mathematics. They were attentive and seemed interested in what they were doing. We didn't spend much time with them. Again many of them were anxious to share their favourite stories from a book entitled: "The Old Fashioned Ice Cream Freezer". (Grade 3 Reader: First Aid In English Reader B by Angus Maciver.) This book is really out of date and should be scrapped by now.

Grade 4: One class had finished a poetry class – "The Doctor" by Rose Fyleman and had gone on the Consonant blends the, throat, thing.

Grade 5: These classrooms were well supplied with books of all sorts and children who had completed their work were reading.

Grade 6: It was good to see the partition removed from between two grade 6 classes and both groups engaged in a music lesson.

The important point is that the students of grades 5 and *6 were not merely preparing for the CEE* but engaged in other subject areas.

For 15 minutes each day the teachers and students all do silent reading i.e. Sustained Silent Reading.

We paid special attention to the school's library. This is a quote from a magazine, that was published on the school's 21st anniversary (p. 4):

> At glance the library appears small but it has a wide range of reading material. There are fiction and Non-fiction books... The Reference section of the library is very important. Among the reference books are encyclo-paedias, dictionaries and many books on specific subjects... Our library like most of the good libraries is not limited to research and the studied subjects. It is a place where one can sit comfortably and read colourful magazines of all sorts.

Now the school is also equipped with a video recorder and one shelf in the library has the video tapes of childrens' stories, cartoons etc. The principal's great interest in having good books for the children at her school was also manifested in the large number of books in every classroom. Most of them were gifts from U.S.A. and from friends of the school. We got the book list for the different grades. The books on the list are provided by the children's parents.

Some of the children are taught in special groups before integration into the normal classes. These children were being tested during our visit. We had an interesting discussion about testing. The principal stressed the importance of taking the pupils' interest into account when test items are constructed. She explained by telling about a girl, who, according to the test, was to write about her pet! In School 1 not many of the pupils have pets, and this was the case with the girl. In desperation she wrote about her pet *pig*. She did not know very much about pigs, and the situation was quite awkward. The principal urged us to listen to teachers in practice! We will return to this issue in the next chapter, where some suggestions for the future work will be given.

In the discussion between the principal and ourselves, the principal said that:

1 the CEE is not a problem to the children. What is wrong are

a) the parents' attitude

b) the lack of sufficient secondary school places.

2 the questions, especially those asked in the composition section are too traditional and lack challenge to the students' creativity.

4.2 School 2

After a beautiful journey through an early morning in Jamaica we arrived at School 2, where the principal greeted us and made us welcome. He introduced us to the teachers and we were free to move around to observe the teaching and to talk to students and teachers. The atmosphere was friendly, and we had some opportunities to observe LA teaching. The difficulties in finding good teaching materials, where grammar is taught in context, in finding interesting books for the slow readers, in arranging the teaching in overcrowded classrooms etc. were obvious. The number of pupils made it necessary to have two shifts. However, the afternoon shift of students arrived as early as 9.30 to take extra lessons, and having no teacher the noise they made really disturbed the children in class. As there was no separate place for the afternoon shift, they had to work in the corner of the ordinary classroom.

After observing the teaching during the morning we were lucky to have the opportunity to discuss with the teachers. We all assembled in the library. Dr Mitchell and a MOEY&C officer described the project and its objectives. Dr. Mitchell stressed the importance of the collaboration with teachers and asked for their input. Below our notes from the meeting is given.

1 The importance to have the pupils want to learn SE was stressed. The matter of motivation was discussed. Bearing in mind that the children's "heroes", i.e., the Disc Jockeys, do not speak SE but Creole, it can sometimes be hard to have the students realise the necessity of learning SE. Teachers could encourage the students to model TV personalities and others who portray good images in the use of language.

2 The fact that the children don't see their writing in SE being used in functional settings makes is even harder to motivate them to learn SE. What the children write must be made useful. It should not just be papers for the teacher to mark! Their writing should be "published", i.e. put on the wall, on the chalk board or in the case of letters and reports sent to the relevant people.

3 The question about the permissiveness when it comes to Creole was discussed. The general opinion was, that we must look at each child and set

individual goals for the child. If necessary, the child could tell a story in Creole and get help translating it into SE. The main thing is that what is written is about matters that are interesting to the child. Process writing might be a fruitful method to help the students to generate ideas and elaborate on their written compositions. To work in pairs and in groups are arrangements, that can further stimulate the children to work on their stories. Inventive spelling was also mentioned.

4 When it comes to reading materials, again the importance of motivation was stressed. The children must be able to relate to the stories.

5 Thematic teaching and the integrated approach was discussed, i.e. to integrate Social Studies and LA. By so doing, vocabulary and grammar could be taught in a context.

6 The teachers talked about the importance of listening to SE. The use of tape recorders and TV, drama and radio was mentioned, as well as teachers reading to class.

7 In motivating children to use SE they should be encouraged to assist in setting goals, rules and regulations and to work towards implementing these.

4.3 School 3

We arrived for prayers at 8.00 a.m. We observed that the children were very well behaved, were listening attentively, were clean and well attired. Of interest was the fact that parents had also come to attend devotion and they too were listening attentively. Those children who were late moved quietly to one spot, where a teacher was in attendance. As soon as devotion was finished these children moved quietly into their lines, and all listened to the principal's, announcements for the day. Payers for this day was conducted by the vice principal.

This is a *large* inner city school with over 2100 children on roll. Most days at least 1900 are in attendance. But on Fridays the number might fall to as low as 1700.

In the principal's office there is a book called *The Schools Profile.* In this book there is the history of the school, the activities performed by the school, i.e. 4H-

Club, sporting activities, outings for children, teachers and parents, Parents' Days, Christmas Parties for children and parents, staff upgrading seminars etc. In addition there could be seen great community involvement especially from the private sector, such as Jamaica Flour Mills, the Cement Company of Jamaica, various printers, shop keepers and other businesses.

The PTA is a very vibrant organisation and at meetings there are sometimes over 300 parents in attendance. Parents are totally involved in the life of the school and this is why in this inner city school there is not much behavioural problems, such as fightings and other violent activities.

On our visit to the classes we observed both students and teachers at work.

Grade 4:
At this level many children are being prepared to take the Common Entrance Examination (CEE) and do so well that many get into high schools at age 10+. We observed that all the children in the grade 4 classes were working from CEE texts, which means they were filling in blanks or adding to sentences as the case might be.

Grade 5:
The same obtained as in grade 4, except for one class, the slower grade 5 children, who were reading books from the Doctor Bird Series below their grade level. They seemed to understand what they were reading at this level and were able to tell us about the stories.

Grade 6:
The pupils were all working from their CEE books except from one class, which was reading from the Doctor Bird Series. Again this was the slowest group.

Meeting with the teachers
The principal was kind enough to allow us to speak with five senior teachers, who were also year supervisors. They also provided us with the reading lists used by grades 4 - 6. Of note is that the discussion with the teachers contradicted the practise in the classrooms. The following highlights some of the teachers' ideas:

1 They wanted books written in a conversational manner, giving information on different subjects and mostly within the children's experience.

2 They wanted to see more poetry. They thought that poetry was not being taught in most classes at all, that nowadays there were not many poetry books in the book shops to which the children could relate.

3 They stressed that it was necessary for children to be allowed to talk freely, to ask questions and to share ideas. They thought much of this was not being done in many schools. Children learn to speak SE by *communicating* in SE.

4 They were not advocating that children should not use Creole when necessary, actually they advocated bilingualism by code switching.

5 They asked whether some lessons in books could not be written in the form of comic strips, as children are interested in comics. They thought that brighter colours should be used in all texts, even if this costs a little more. This also applies to the quality of paper on which books are printed.

6 Teachers advocated getting away from too much drills and filling in blanks in sentences, and that there should be more analysis of why certain structures are used. The teachers also said that because of "computerised English", i.e., multiple choice questions, beginning teachers were leaving teachers colleges barely being able to use the language.

7 Teachers believe that English across the curriculum should be an integral part of teaching, i.e. the Social Studies or Math teacher should correct English in whatever the children write.

8 In relationship to other methodology they thought the thematic/centre of interest/project approach to teaching should be encouraged. They thought that when children are sent to do projects they often copy verbatim what is in encyclopaedias and other texts. Suggestions in how to conduct research and write a project could be made in the books.

9 They thought that children need different models of good creative writing, i.e. reports, stories, cablegrams, letters, invitations, etc., which they can pattern before writing their own.

4.4 School 4

When we arrived at School 4 all the children (about 1200 pupils are on roll and at our visit 970 attended) were having a break. It was hard to get into the school, as the grill was locked, due to construction work. However, the builders have not been working at the school for a long time. The principal shared her concern and worries with us: "If a fire should burst out, a lot of children would be trapped inside the school building."

The school is in desperate need of furniture, materials, books, telephone ... everything.

The principal had arranged for us to meet the teachers in the school library, which was also a classroom. Dr. Mitchell informed them about the project and the LA component. She asked the teachers what they would wish in order to make the LA teaching more effective.

"A new school", was the unanimous answer.

The teachers spoke very openly about the difficulties in teaching LA. Below the discussion is summarised.

1 Parents need education to be able to co operate with the school in an effort to get the students to read at home.

2 The children watch too much TV and video and spend too little time reading. The teachers wish TV programmes for schools be developed.

3 At the parish library, the librarian could teach the children how to choose appropriate literature etc.

4 Reading programme ought to be developed and reading centres established. Students who need extra training could attend Summer school.

5 There is a need for more comprehension passages within childrens' experiences. The teachers should make their own stories to match the reading levels of the classes.

6 Pupils should write more. Writing ought to be included in CEE.

7 The Creole should not be taught but used when needed in school. The teacher should help the pupil to translate into English. "Both are saying the same things and both are correct." The children should learn when either language is appropriate.

And again

8 A new school is urgently needed.

4.5 School 5

School 5 is an IDB I school, now 5 years old. As the telephone was recently installed we had not been able to make an appointment with the principal. Despite this he gave us some of his time. The reason for our visit to School 5 was that we had heard about a reading programme being developed there. We met the teacher in charge of the programme.

We must mention the fact that this school has an excellent library with interesting reading material.

As Dr. Rosenquist, a Swedish consultant, is specially assigned to study special education, we asked permission for him to make a visit to the school for further observations. Our report on School 5 is therefore just a brief comment on the existence of the reading programme.

5 Summary and Suggestions

Lena Holmberg and Ivy Mitchell

Our visits to schools and the teachers' comments will validate the findings we made from the studies of the texts.

First we present a summary of each the following:

1 Listening and talking
2 Reading comprehension
3 Grammar/structure
4 Writing
5 English across curriculum.

In each topic we will include comments and observations from the school visits.

5.1 Listening and talking

In our discussions with teachers at the schools we visited one concern, which was always presented, was the fact that children did not get enough chance to speak freely and express themselves. Children will learn SE only by listening to SE and modelling this in their own speech.

Teachers felt that the children should be allowed to express themselves freely in their home language, i.e. in Jamaican Creole and then by the help of the teacher translate this into SE. It was stressed that at no time should the children be made to feel that their language was not a language in its own right. They should be proud of their language but realise that SE is necessary when dealing with formal situations, documents, etc.

If students are aware that they are bilingual and that they can do code switching depending on the situation, then they will be motivated to become speakers and writers in SE.

Recommendations: We recommend that the matter of bilingualism in the Jamaican context be properly dealt with in any curriculum that is developed in Language Arts for Jamaican children.

5.2 Reading comprehension

Books with a variety of topics and subject matter for comprehension already exist. These books have passages which range from pictures, poems, short passages, long passages, informational, narrative, etc. They appeal to the children's imagination and provide scope for research and creativity in the type of questions asked and in the follow up activities. These books are not on the book lists for grades 4 - 6. All the books that are there are the language books, especially those which prepare the children for CEE.

There are however a number of books on the market which, despite the colourful pictures and interesting passages, still invite children to fill in blanks and look for details in the texts. Children are not always required to use their higher order thinking skills.

Many teachers advocated the need for books which are challenging and require the children to use their ability to think beyond the factual level.

Recommendation: We suggest that the Doctor Bird Series be revised, so that all children will have access to interesting books of different genres, that cover a variety of content areas and have colourful illustrations. Furthermore we suggest a Teacher's Guide be developed, in which new approaches to the teaching of comprehension are given. These should include the assistance to the teacher to

- *choose texts*, which are in the children's own experience or with which they can identify, interesting, within their reading level, and which will also motivate them to want to find out more and do more reading on the topic.

  Teachers should realise that they too can be creative in choosing materials for comprehension from i.e. newspapers, magazines, a speech, a piece of drama, a song, etc.

- *develop their own questions and activities* according to what is taking place at that particular time or what is needed for that particular class or individual pupil. Children should also be involved in the development of questions and activities.

5.3 Writing

There are books which use a thematic approach as frequently as possible and make an effort to link comprehension topics with writing exercises. But in most books there is hardly any writing, at least not sustained, creative writing. Children filling in blanks we do not consider writing - writing is communication!

The comprehension passages do not always provide enough models for writing as most of them are narrative and parts of stories. Children do not therefore always get a complete picture of a story with cause and effect, conflict resolution, development of characters, and so on. Children can not identify with the characters in a some of the passages.

Writing should enable the child to explore his thoughts and ideas and to record these in the best way he can. Perhaps he can only share his thoughts through a combination of drawing and invented spelling. He should be allowed to do this. Children should be encouraged to write stories, reports, poems, compositions, short plays, reflections, observation. -- *Children learn to write by writing!*

Recommendation: A Teacher's Guide on writing/expressive skills should be developed. This would guide the teacher in the use of the process approach in which children

- explore a topic/brainstorm, i.e. semantic mapping, discussion of ideas.
- select and group of ideas, which are related
- make a rough draft
- collaborate in pairs, small groups, with teacher
- write the complete story or composition
- revise/edit
- get responses from others
- make a final copy
- PUBLISH.

This is only one method that can be used. There are several others, which will be presented during the training programme within the LA component of this project (PEIP II).

5.4 Grammatical structures

In contrast to the books which are written specifically for the CEE are other texts which treat grammar in a holistic manner, i.e. grammar emanates from the comprehension and writing exercises and are done in context. Children are therefore learning grammatical structures without conscious effort. They are not merely filling in blanks with nouns or verbs; masculine or feminine words; but are using the structures constructively, for example a story is given and the children are asked to retell the story in the past tense. Another exercise shows a series of pictures and the children are to tell the story in the present tense.

From most of the school visits the teachers questioned how best language could be taught to the Creole speaking child. There were many thoughts on this matter and many teachers were of the opinion that they had to be flexible in the approach to teaching grammatical structures. Most teachers abandoned drills and filling in blanks in favour of a more activity and analytical oriented approach.

Recommendations: We suggest that a Teacher's Guide be developed for the teaching of grammatical structures. Such a guide should assist the teacher to

- find meaningful context
- choose the most useful structures in assisting the Creole speaking child to learn SE
- adjust the language programme to the individual needs of the children
- assist the children to use the new structures in meaningful and functional ways as often as possible.

5.5 English across the curriculum

We did not see much of the integrated approach or teaching language "across the curriculum" in the books analysed. At one school we visited the teachers stressed that the children's language development is the responsibility of all the teachers in the school. They said that subject teachers, e.g. Mathematics, Science and Social studies should correct English and explain the corrections in the writings.

The consensus of the teachers was that a centre of interest approach could be used by several teachers in a particular school, all working together on different subjects. The theme *weather* for instance could be used by all subject areas with

the children all involved in writing about different aspects of weather as approached by the various subject teachers.

The children could also build their own units on smaller themes according to their level of achievement.

Recommendations: The revised curriculum should stress a *thematic approach.* The Teachers' guide that is developed should give guidelines in how to find interesting themes and build lessons around these. The children themselves should be encouraged to develop themes.

The recommendations given will be an integral part of the training of resource teachers within the LA component of the project. We have continually had discussions with Dr. Bryan and Ministry officers on the contents of the training programme and see our recommendations as fitting into the concepts underlying the training programme.

5.6 Instruments for testing LA performance

The review of teaching materials and the observation of ongoing teaching also create an input for suggestions, concerning instruments for measuring the students performance in the LA. It must again be emphasised that teachers tend to "teach to the test". Of utmost importance therefore is that the tests are in accordance with the goals and guidelines in a revised curriculum for the LA.

Hence, the suggestions for LA instruments are:

1 The tests should be built up thematically.

2 Reading should be tested through texts of different genres, e.g. narrative, informational, poetry, etc.

3 Comprehension should be tested through questions or tasks on different cognitive levels, e.g. recall, inferential, reflective, etc.

4 Vocabulary should be tested within context, i.e. the students could be asked to use or explain words in the reading texts.

5 The writing tasks being developed should be integral parts of the theme for the tests.

6 Different aspects of writing should be evaluated, e.g. contents, handwriting, vocabulary, grammar, etc.

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Abstract card

Holmberg, L. & Mitchell, I. (1999). *Teaching Materials for the Language Arts Grades 4-6: A Study within the Primary Education Improvement Project in Jamaica* (Educational and Psychological Interactions, No. 120). Malmö, Sweden: Malmö University, Department of Educational and Psychological Research.

The focus of this report is the Language Arts component within the Primary Education Improvement Project (PEIP II) in Jamaica that was launched in 1993 and specifically the cataloguing and reviewing of LA materials being used in primary schools at the grade 4 to 6 levels.

Content suitability, levels of difficulty, layout, print and illustrations were studied in readers. Methodologies used in a sample of texts were evaluated. Visits to schools proved useful in the study as views of the teachers validated the findings from the review.

Three major recommendations are mentioned: The matter of bilingualism in the Jamaican context must be properly dealt with. Grammatical structures must be taught within meaningful contexts. Teachers' guides should be developed.

Keywords: Bilingualism, grades 4-6, Language Arts, teaching materials, teaching methodology.

Reference card

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